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Background

- The USDA defines food insecurity (FI) as when individuals lack the resources to obtain food in socially acceptable ways.¹
- There are three types of FI: 1) marginal food security is indicated by a shortage of food or anxiety over food sufficiency, 2) low food security is when a person reports reduced variety, quality, or desirability of their diet, and 3) very low food security is characterized by reduced food intake and multiple reports of disrupted eating patterns.¹
- According to the USDA, 10.2% of the U.S. population was food insecure in 2021.¹
- Based on the current literature, an average of 36% of college students are food insecure.²⁻¹⁸
- Researchers have identified numerous factors that are associated with a higher risk of experiencing food insecurity including race/ethnicity, place of residence, age, financial independence, employment status, academic classification, children/dependents, international versus domestic student type, financial aid receipt, and income level.²⁻¹⁸
- There are limited studies regarding FI at private colleges, likely because FI is assumed to be low.

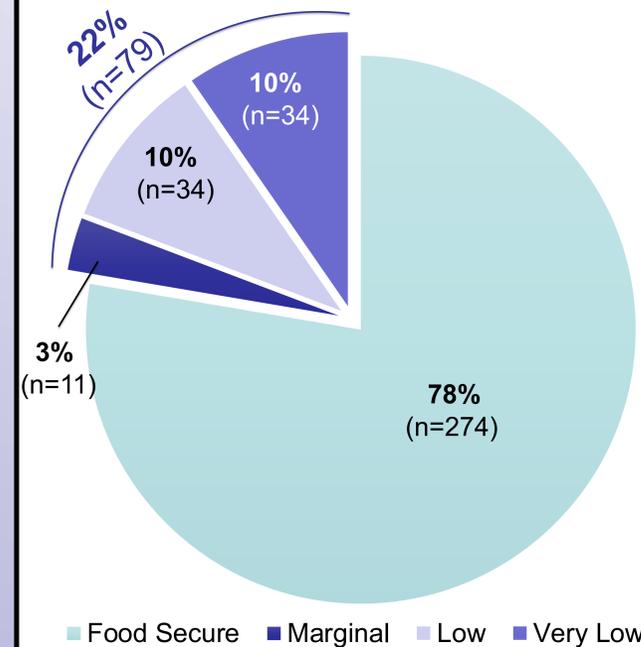
Objectives

- To identify the rate and distribution of food insecurity at a private university in North Texas.
- To analyze the demographic, socio-economic, and other factors associated with food insecurity among college students at private institutions.

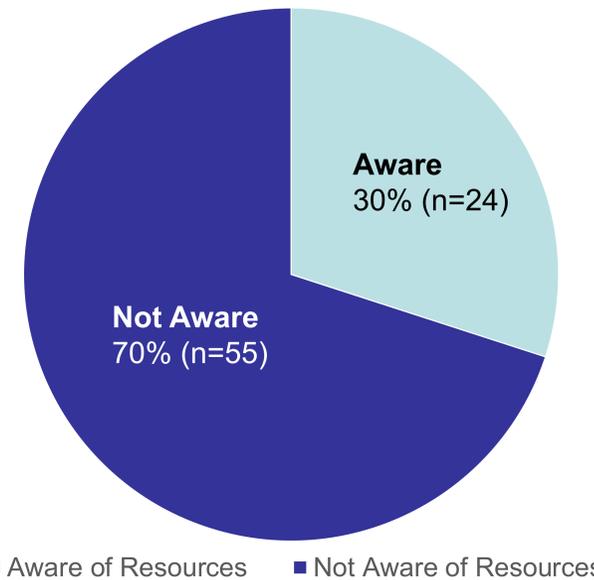
Methods

- In this cross-sectional study, participants completed a one-time online survey.
- The survey included sociodemographic questions and the validated USDA Adult Food Security Survey Module to measure FI status among current university students ≥ 18 years of age.
- Ordinal logistic regression, based on the Proportional Odds model, was conducted to determine the association between FI and sociodemographic variables.

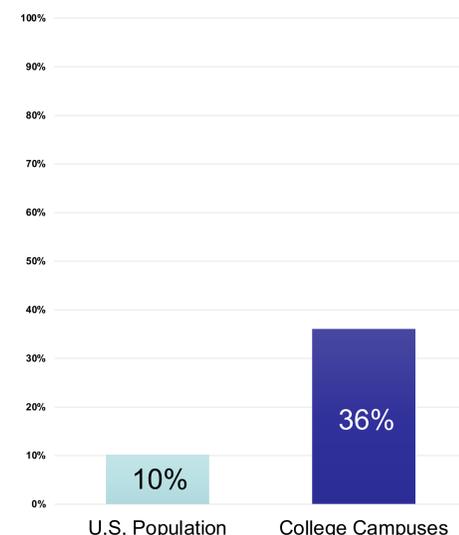
Prevalence of Food Insecurity at Current University



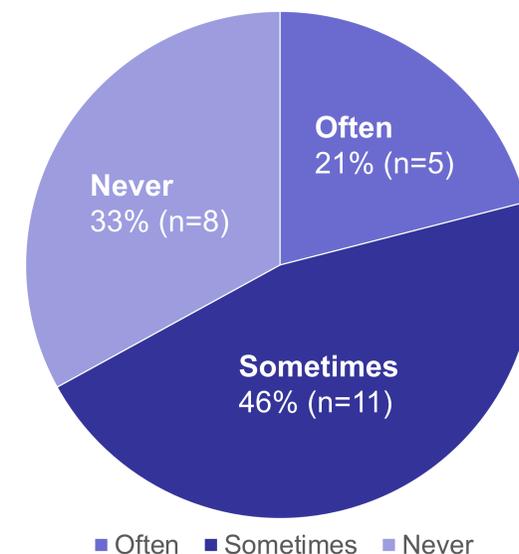
Food Insecure Participants' Awareness of Resources On or Near Campus



Comparison of Food Insecurity Among the US Population Versus College Campuses



Food Insecure Participants' Utilization of Resources On or Near Campus



Results

- The majority of participants were white (82%, n=288), non-Hispanic (83%, n=293), and women (77%, n=271) with a mean age of 22.5±6.6 years.
- Of the 353 participants in the study, 22.4% (n=79) were classified as food insecure and 9.6% (n=34) were classified as having very low food security with evidence of reduced intake and disrupted eating patterns.
- Participants who were underclassmen (p=0.029), receiving more financial aid (p=0.016), international (p=0.081), Hispanic/Latinx (p=0.478), and older (p=0.283) were more likely to have greater FI.
- Among the food insecure participants, 30.4% (n=24) were aware of resources to obtain food on or near campus. Only 20.3% (n=16) of food insecure participants had used those resources.

Conclusions

- More research is needed regarding FI at private universities.
- At the current university, a similar study with a larger, more representative sample would help to confirm the findings of the current study and further identify factors associated with FI among college students.
- This study provides sufficient data to take action to address FI by means of advocacy, dissemination of resource information, and the addition of new resources, such as an on-campus food pantry.

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